

February 27, 2001

## NATIONAL HEPATITIS C PROGRAM

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Administration Health (VHA) Directive outlines the National VHA Hepatitis C Program, compiles all VHA policies and programs on Hepatitis C, and outlines facilities' specific requirements for implementing this program.

### 2. BACKGROUND

a. Hepatitis C is a major public health problem in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly 4 million Americans are infected with the Hepatitis C virus, many of whom are unaware that they have been exposed. Approximately 30,000 new infections occur annually. Hepatitis C, an important public health and medical problem for many veterans, is a high priority for VHA which has, since 1998, undertaken an impressive program to identify, screen, test, and treat veterans for Hepatitis C. **NOTE:** *In 1998, 112,996 veterans were tested for Hepatitis C and from January 1999 to March 2000, 213,252 veterans were tested. During 1999, the VA Allocation Resources Center estimates that 31,937 veterans were in treatment for Hepatitis C, and during the first three quarters of Fiscal Year (FY) 2000, 27,316 veterans received treatment.*

b. The VHA Hepatitis C Program uses a comprehensive approach emphasizing clinical care and prevention through testing, counseling, research and education.

(1) Under Secretary for Health Information Letter 10-98-013, dated June 11, 1998, outlines standards for provider evaluation and testing for Hepatitis C in VHA, (see <http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/health>).

(2) On March 17, 1999, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conducted a nationwide surveillance activity and tested over 26,000 veterans for Hepatitis C. The testing revealed a point prevalence rate of 6.6 percent with a wide variation by geography and era of military service.

(3) In January 1999, VHA established two Centers of Excellence in Hepatitis C located at Miami VA Medical Center and San Francisco VA Medical Center. The Centers of Excellence serve as catalysts for VHA-wide education, clinical care and research on Hepatitis C. **NOTE:** *The Centers of Excellence on Hepatitis C website can be found at <http://www.va.gov/HepatitisC>*

(4) On June 28, 2000, The Under Secretary for Health, designated an additional \$20 million to be distributed to the 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) for outreach, testing, counseling and treating veterans with Hepatitis.

(5) VHA Directive 2000-019, July 19, 2000, mandated the installation and use of Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) software on clinical reminders that support the Hepatitis C reporting process, (see <http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/health>).

(6) On August 24, 2000, the Policy Board designated specific Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) reimbursement based on Hepatitis C treatment categories, i.e., standard or

## **VHA DIRECTIVE 2001-009**

**February 27, 2001**

complex. On September 20, 2000, the Under Secretary for Health approved annual reimbursement to the VISNs at the complex level (\$42,000 per patient) for the care of veterans who are undergoing treatment for Hepatitis C.

c. In November 2000, VHA expanded the Hepatitis C program to emphasize the public health and medical aspects of this chronic viral disease. Specifically, Hepatitis C will continue to have a high priority and visibility in VHA. The VHA National Hepatitis C Program incorporates and places additional emphasis on the following elements:

(1) A Veterans' Hepatitis C Awareness Program that aggressively works within VA and with external groups to improve awareness about Hepatitis C among veterans.

(2) A Hepatitis C Clinician Education Program that ensures all VA clinicians are provided the most up-to-date scientific information about Hepatitis C in order to deliver the highest quality care to veterans, as well as to assist those at risk, to prevent becoming infected with the virus that causes Hepatitis C.

(3) A Hepatitis C Screening, Testing and Counseling Program that provides multiple avenues of access to veterans who wish to be tested for Hepatitis C.

(4) A Hepatitis C Care Program that delivers the highest standard of care to veterans with Hepatitis C. Treatment guidelines were first issued in August 1998 and were last updated in January 2000, (see <http://www.va.gov/hepatitisc/MDtrtg.htm>).

(5) A Hepatitis C Prevention Program that works with various parts of VHA to identify veterans who may be at risk for acquiring Hepatitis C and to offer risk reduction and prevention interventions.

(6) A Veterans' Hepatitis C Quality Management and Database Program that works with existing VA data systems, collecting and analyzing quantitative data on Hepatitis C, utilization, and quality parameters in order to continually improve Hepatitis C care and prevention.

d. The Hepatitis C Technical Advisory Group is a VA group formed to advise staff of the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards about VHA Hepatitis C programs, policies, initiatives, clinician and patient education programs, clinical care, prevention issues, as well as research priorities for Hepatitis. This Group is comprised of VHA leaders in clinical care, research, management, laboratory, and the VISNs, as well as the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Office of Information, policy leadership, and other relevant aspects of VHA.

e. The monthly Hepatitis C conference call provides current information about Hepatitis C treatments, the National VHA Hepatitis C Program, VHA Hepatitis C policies and other related issues. The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards coordinates this monthly conference call. Topics for this monthly Hepatitis C Hot Line call include clinical and treatment issues, VHA Hepatitis C policies and programs, Hepatitis C prevention issues and programs, and other germane issues.

f. Hepatitis C treatment is rapidly evolving. Improved understanding of the natural history and pathogenesis of the disease and the development of new, improved antiviral therapies will continue to have impact on Hepatitis C care and treatment. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Conference on the treatment of Hepatitis C ("Management of Hepatitis C." NIH Consensus Statement. No.15 (3), 1-41, 1997) outlined the principles of treatment given current knowledge and drugs. **NOTE:** *The VA Centers of Excellence in Hepatitis C updates treatment guidelines regularly and they can be found at:* <http://www.va.gov/hepatitisc/MDEduc.htm>.

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that each VA medical center Director must designate a Hepatitis C Lead Clinician who is to be the principal point of contact for all clinical Hepatitis C communications and reporting between the facility, the Hepatitis C Program office, and other program offices.

#### 4. ACTION

a. Already identified Hepatitis C Lead Clinicians are listed in Attachment A. The facility Director should review this list, ensure it is correct, and respond as in (b.) if needed.

b. The facility Director, annually by March 15, must fax to the Hepatitis C Program Office (132) c/o the Center for Quality Management in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C Care, VA Palo Alto Health Care System (132) at (650) 849-0266, the following information: the name, address, phone, fax, e-mail address, and other locator information of the Hepatitis C Lead Clinician.

c. If the facility Hepatitis C Lead Clinician changes, the facility Director must fax the following information to the Hepatitis C Program Office (132) c/o the Center for Quality Management in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C Care, VA Palo Alto Health Care System (132) at (650) 849-0266: the name, address, phone, fax, e-mail address, and other locator information of the Hepatitis C Lead Clinician.

#### 5. REFERENCES

a. VHA Hepatitis C Centers of Excellence in Hepatitis C: <http://www.va.gov/hepatitisc>.

b. "Management of Hepatitis C." NIH Consensus Statement. No.15 (3), 1-41, 1997.

c. VHA Directive 2000-019, July 19, 2000, Installation of Clinical Reminders 1.5 Software.

d. VHA Executive Decision memorandum approved by the Under Secretary for Health on September 20, 2000.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Acting Chief Consultant of the Public Health Strategic Healthcare Group is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to 202-273-8567.

**VHA DIRECTIVE 2001-009**  
**February 27, 2001**

**7. RECISSIONS:** None. This VHA Directive expires February 28, 2006.

S/ by Frances Murphy, M.D. for  
Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.  
Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

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February 27, 2001

ATTACHMENT A

VISN	Station Name	Station Number	Clinician Name
1	Bedford (Edith Rogers)	518	Vincent Agnello, MD
	Boston Health Care/Jamaican Plain	523	Marcos Pedrosa, MD
	Charleston (Ralph Johnson)	534	Delores Brown, RN
	Connecticut (West Haven)	689	Roberto Groszmann, MD
	Manchester VAMC	608	Marie Gavin, RN
	Northampton VAMC	631	George Ponte
	Providence VAMC	650	Diane Loveless and Fred Silverblatt, MD
	Togus VAM&ROC	402	Philip Amidon, MD
	White River Junction VAM&ROC	405	Mary Chafee, RN
2	Albany (Samuel Stratton)	500	Raymond P. Smith, MD
	Bath VAMC	514	Phyllis Kephart, MD
	Battle Creek VAMC	515	Ireneo Diaz
	Canandaigua VAMC	532	Krishna Sarma, MD
	Upstate New York (Syracuse)	670	Uma Murthy, MD
	Western New York (Buffalo)	528	Thomas C. Mahl, MD
3	Bronx VAMC	526	Norbert Brau, MD
	Hudson Valley HCS (Montrose)	620	Saray Stancic, MD
	New York Harbor VAMC	630	Edmund J. Bini, MD, FACP FACG
	Northport VAMC	632	Gerry Lake-Bakkar
4	Altoona (James Van Zandt)	503	Jay Cool, PA-C
	Butler VAMC	529	Charlotte F. Stecko, RN, BSN
	Clarksburg VAMC (Louis Johnson)	540	Helen Ray
	Coatesville VAMC	542	Samuel S. Mohr, RN, BSN
	Erie VAMC	562	Anthony Behm, DO
	Lebanon VAMC	595	Robert F. Weil, MD
	Philadelphia VAMC	642	Joel Maslow, MD, PhD
	Pittsburgh HCS (University)	646	Ahmad Obaid Shakil, MD
	Wilkes-Barre VAMC	693	Patricia A. Jacques, RN, MS CIC
	Wilmington	460	Rena D. Johnson, RNP
5	Martinsburg VAMC	613	Beverly V. Johnson, RNC, MS, CHES
	Maryland (Baltimore) HCS	512	Bonnie Charan, PA-C
	Washington, DC VAMC	688	Doris Strader, MD

**VHA DIRECTIVE 2001-009****February 27, 2001**

6	Asheville VAMC	637	Sumodh Kalathil, MD
	Beckley VAMC	517	Chin May Win-Chen, MD
	Durham VAMC	558	Kenneth H. Wilson, MD
	Fayetteville VAMC (North Carolina)	565	Peter K. Chung, MD
	Gainesville VAMC	573	Charles J. Zeilman, ARNP
	Hampton VAMC	590	Edwin L. Burke, MD
	Richmond VAMC (Hunter Holmes McGuire)	652	Anastasios Mihas, MD
	Salisbury VAMC	659	Dennis Isiguen, MD
7	Alabama (Montgomery)	619	Dianne Wills, CRNP
	Birmingham VAMC	521	Michael Fallon, MD
	Tuscaloosa VAMC	679	Gajendra Khatri, MD
8	Bay Pines VAMC	516	David P. Johnson, MD
	Miami VAMC	546	Lennox J. Jeffers, MD
	San Juan VAMC	672	Jaime Martinez-Souss, MD
	Tampa VAMC (James Haley)	673	William Boyd, MD
	West Palm Beach VAMC	548	Curtis E. Scott, MD
9	Huntington VAMC	581	Marc Subik, MD
	Lexington VAMC	596	Steve Shedlofsky, MD
	Louisville VAMC	603	Craig J. McClain, MD
	Memphis VAMC	614	Bradford Waters
	Mountain Home VAMC	621	Anca Pop, MD
	Nashville VAMC	626	Joseph A. Awad, MD
10	Chillicothe VAMC	538	Ali Shadchehr, MD
	Cincinnati VAMC	539	Charles Mendenhall, MD
	Cleveland (Louis Stokes)	541	Gerard Isenberg, MD
	Columbus VAMC	757	Ronald S. Miller, MD
	Dayton VAMC	552	Chris Barde, MD
11	Ann Arbor VAMC	506	Richard H. Moseley, MD
	Detroit (John D. Dingell)	553	Richard Jaszewski, MD
	Indianapolis (Richard L. Roudebush)	583	Janet Stockbridge
	Northern Indiana HCS (Marion)	610	Pat Bertram and Wilma Cox, NP
	Saginaw (Aleda Lutz)	655	Paula Dennison, RN CIC

12	Chicago HCS (West Side)	537	Hong T. Lam, PharmD
	Hines (Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital)	578	Nikunj Shah, MD
	Iron Mountain VAMC	585	Toby Gendron, MD
	Madison (William Middleton)	607	Karen Meng, NP
	Milwaukee VAMC (Clement Zablocki)	695	Kulwinder Dua, MD
	North Chicago VAMC	556	Axel Feller, MD
	Tomah VAMC	676	Dale Wicklund, MD
13	Black Hills HCS (Fort Meade)	568	Lana Fischer, MD
	Fargo VAM&ROC	437	Sam B. Ho, MD
	Minneapolis VAMC	618	Samuel B. Ho, MD
	Sioux Falls (Royal Johnson)	438	Sam B. Ho, MD
	St. Cloud VAMC	656	Sam B. Ho, MD
14	Central Iowa HCS (Des Moines)	555	Mary Wilfon
	Greater Nebraska VAHCS (Lincoln)	597	Mark Mailliard, MD
	Iowa City VAMC	584	Deborah Hebl, RN
	Omaha VAMC	636	Mark Mailliard, MD
15	Columbia (Harry Truman)	543	Paul King, MD
	Eastern Kansas HCS (Topeka)	677	Purush Dasaraju, MD
	Kansas City VAMC	589	Allan Weston, MD
	Marion (Illinois)	609	Jose G. Fernandez, MD
	Popular Bluff (John Pershing)	647	Prashant Parekh, MD
	St. Louis VAMC	657	Claus Fimmel, MD
	Wichita	452	Rebecca Staab, RNP
16	Alexandria	502	Akbar Rizvi, MD
	Central Arkansas HCS (Little Rock)	598	Fedja A. Rochling, MD
	Fayetteville VAMC (Arkansas)	564	Mary Ann Harris, RN BSN, CIC
	Gulf Coast HCS (Biloxi)	520	Javed Mohiuddin, MD
	Houston VAMC	580	Shahriar Tabasi, MD
	Jackson VAMC (G.V. 'Sonny' Montgomery)	586	Maher Azzouz, MD
	New Orleans VAMC	629	Thiruvengadam Ramakrishnan, MD
	Oklahoma City VAMC	635	Sidandar Mesyia, MD
	Shreveport (Overton Brooks)	667	Vivek R. Huilgol, MD
	Tulsa Outpatient Clinic	623	W. Jo Prebeck, RN

**VHA DIRECTIVE 2001-009****February 27, 2001**

17	Central Texas (Temple)	674	Linda Reed, RN, APN
	North Texas (Dallas)	549	Geri Brown, MD
	South Texas (San Antonio)	671	Hector H. Trevino, MD
18	Amarillo VAMC	504	Andrew Stenhouse, MD
	Big Spring VAMC	519	Myint M. Kyu, MD
	El Paso VAMC	756	Carlos Neira, MD
	New Mexico VAHCS	501	
	Phoenix (Carl Hayden)	644	David A. Johnson, MD
	Prescott VAMC	649	Debra Hiller, ANP
	Tucson VAMC	678	Richard E. Sampliner, MD
19	Cheyenne	442	William McIntyre, MD
	Denver VAMC	554	Mary Bessesen, MD
	Grand Junction VAMC	575	John Severs, MD
	Montana HCS	436	David Slaughter, MD
	Salt Lake City VAMC	660	Christopher Tietze, MD
	Sheridan VAMC	666	S. Scott Tenney, MD
20	Anchorage	463	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	Boise VAMC	531	Don L. Rowbert, MD
	Portland	648	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	Puget Sound	663	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	Roseburg	653	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	Spokane	668	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	Walla Walla	687	Don L. Rowberg, MD
	White City	692	Don L. Rowberg, MD
21	Central California (Fresno)	570	Helen Wong, MD
	Honolulu	459	Fernando Ona, MD
	Manila VAM&ROC	358	Leana Agustin, MD
	Northern California (Martinez)	612	Jon A. Green, MD
	Palo Alto HCS	640	Ramsey Cheung, MD
	San Francisco	662	Kristine Stick, NP
	Sierra Nevada HCS (Reno)	654	Theresa Rucker, RN
22	Greater Los Angeles HCS	691	Joseph Pisegna, MD
	Loma Linda (Jerry Pettis)	605	Phil Roos, MD
	Long Beach HCS	600	Timothy R. Morgan, MD
	San Diego	664	Mary Lee Krinsky, MD
	Southern Nevada VAHCS	593	Kathryn Crooks, MD



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